The question of peace and war is of vital interest to every nation. That is true in a peculiar measure of the nations of Central Europe. In the last great European conflict, some of them, by a series of happy chances, escaped the worst horrors of fighting on their own soil. In the next great conflict, if it should come, they can hardly hope to be so fortunate.

This fact means that the success of the Disarmament Conference is of very special importance to their Governments and peoples. If the Conference succeeds we may reasonably hope that a firm foundation will be laid for stable peace. If it should fail, no one can predict the consequences to which its failure may lead, but few can doubt that it would open an epoch of armament competition which, in all human probability, would end in war.

Since these things are true, it follows that the return of Germany to the Disarmament Conference must cause lively satisfaction to the nations of Central Europe as it has done to the world at large. There can be no doubt that Germany's return will help us to hasten forward with the conclusion of a Disarmament Treaty. There can also be no doubt that the principles laid down in the agreement come to in the Hotel Beau Rivage a week ago will assist the Conference in its work.

For, by agreeing to those principles, five of
the greatest nations in the world have recognised that when the Disarmament Treaty is made, it must embody the grant to all States, including the States disarmed by treaty, of equality of rights and a system which will provide security for all nations. "Equality" and "security" are subjects which have been on the agenda of the Conference since it opened. Everybody knew that the ultimate problems of armament reduction could not be solved until they had been dealt with, but everybody was so impressed by the political difficulty of dealing with them that hitherto their consideration has been consistently postponed. The adoption of this agreement and of the principles which it contains should open the way for the serious consideration in the immediate future of these two problems. For, in the work which it has to do, the Conference will no doubt be guided by the pledge which these great Governments have given that security must be provided and that, in armament levels, equality of rights must be the objective aimed at.

The Beau Rivage agreement further makes it plain that, in seeking practical armament equality, the method shall be that of reduction by armed nations under the armament of, the Armament, of, the Disarmament, Treaty. It makes it plain that this method is to be applied in stages; that equality of fact shall be achieved not by one Conference but by two or more.

Finally, the Beau Rivage agreement pledges the Governments of Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, to join in a solemn reaffirmation that they will not in any circumstances attempt to solve any present or future differences between the signatories by resort to force. This is no new obligation. It is a
"reaffirmation" of the obligations which the Covenant and the Kellogg Pact contain, but at the moment, when armament reduction is being aimed at and when Europe is divided by disputes, open or latent, of various kinds, no one can doubt that such reaffirmation should help to create the atmosphere of confidence that is required.

In the light of these considerations, it is evident that the Beau Rivage agreement is a potent instrument and that it may mark an important step forward in the work of the Disarmament Conference, but let no one exaggerate the scope of what has been agreed to. Principles have been laid down, but no hint is given as to the means by which those principles will be applied. The formula contains no indication of any concrete decision on any point of practical armament reduction. No doubt it will be said it is for the Conference itself, and not for a group of Powers in private meeting, to make decisions of that kind. That, no doubt, is true. But it is also true that, unless the greater Governments of the world, those who now maintain the greatest armament, will make up their minds about the measures of armament reduction to which they will agree, these principles will remain unfruitful and the Beau Rivage agreement will become a scrap of paper. The responsibility of the greater Governments for the success of the Conference is every whit as great as their responsibility for securing Germany's return. Only when they have made
it known what they will do to organise peace and give security to all nations in a system of co-operative assurance against aggressive war; only when they have decided what drastic measures of reduction they will carry through with their own armed forces can it be said that they have made an adequate contribution to the work in which the Conference is engaged. May the day be near when they will give such decisions to the world!